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S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE CHURCH OF

St. P E T E R L E P O O R,

IN

BROAD-STREET, LONDON,

On SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 1793,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE

PHILANTHROPIC-SOCIETY,

By THE REV. JOHN FRESSELICQUE, A. B.

Late of Queen's College, Cambridge, and Chaplain of his
Majesty's Ship BELLEROPHON.

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L O N D O N:

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SEYMOUR

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF

ST. PETER LE POOR

IN

BROAD-STREET, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, JANUARY, 1833

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE

THE BRITISH MUSEUM



BY THE REV. J. H. STOKES, D.D.

Dean of St. Peter's Church, Cambridge, and Chaplain of the

University of Cambridge.

LONDON:

Printed by J. H. Stokess, at the Office of St. Peter's Church, Broad-Street, London.

1833.

THE END

OF THE

TO HIS GRACE
THE DUKE OF LEEDS, PRESIDENT,
THE VICE PRESIDENTS,
THE COMMITTEE,
AND THE WHOLE BODY OF SUBSCRIBERS,

TO THAT MOST EXCELLENT INSTITUTION, THE

Philanthropic-Society,

FOR PREVENTING THE CRIMES
AND CORRECTING THE VICES
OF THE PROFLIGATE POOR,
FOR WHOSE BENEFIT THIS FEEBLE ATTEMPT
WAS MADE,

AND TO THE
VERY WORTHY AND RESPECTABLE PERSONS
INHABITING THE PARISH OF

ST. PETER LE POOR,
IN BROAD-STREET, LONDON,

BEFORE WHOM IT WAS CARRIED INTO EFFECT,

THIS

S E R M O N

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THEIR OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

Newington-Butts, Surry,

May 10, 1793.

TO HIS GRACE
THE DUKE OF LEEDS, PRESIDENT,
THE VICE PRESIDENTS,
THE COMMITTEE,
AND THE WHOLE BODY OF SUBSCRIBERS,
TO THAT MOST EXCELLENT INSTITUTION, THE

Epiphany Society.

FOR PREVENTING THE CRIMES
AND CORRECTING THE VICES
OF THE PROFLIGATE POOR,
FOR WHOSE BENEFIT THIS PEEBLE ATTEMPT
WAS MADE,
AND TO THE
VERY WORTHY AND RESPECTABLE PERSONS
INHAUSING THE PARISH OF

27, PETER LE POOR,

IN BROAD STREET, LONDON.

THOSE WHOM IT WAS CARRIED INTO EFFECT.

THIS

S E R M O N

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THEIR ORATOR

THE ACTOR

S E R M O N.

St. LUKE, CHAP. XIII. VERSE 9.

And, if it bear Fruit, well.

IF the views of our great Creator are intended to be brought to perfection, in his own good time, by the humble endeavours of man, it is the duty and it ought to be the inclination of man to observe, with attention, (and to make such observation the object of his unwearied perseverance,) whatever appears most likely to ensure to him the approbation of his Maker.

Our

Our blessed Saviour hath told us, that mere declarations of unlimited reverence are not the only steps to happiness and God's favour; "not every one that saith unto me, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven."

Justice, beneficence, mercy, loving-kindness, and forgiveness, constituted the most distinguished parts in the character of Jesus Christ. — He came into the world to save sinners; every part of his conduct, every hour of his mortal existence, from his attainment to maturity to his death, was consecrated by some act of benevolence: "Go, and sin no more." "Thy sins are forgiven thee." "Take up thy bed and walk." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." "Take my yoke upon ye, and learn of me; for, I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for, my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." He came, He saw, He conquered sin in his own person, He subjected himself to insult and to a cruel death, that He might rise again for the justification of man.

By every action of his life he proved, that good could come out of Nazareth; that the "son of the carpenter" (as he was called by the sceptics of that day, and would to God it had not extended to those of the present time) was capable
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of the administration of comfort, not only to the body, but to the soul, of man. — We should, therefore, as far as the imbecillity of our nature will allow us, endeavour to merit the approbation of our God, by labouring to do good in our separate, our relative, and collective, stations; let us “be pitiful,” the common customs of the world will teach us to “be courteous.”

The parable, from which the text is taken, is a most beautiful and important example of the conduct which should be observed towards those who have hitherto been useless members of society. — It evinces how far superior the *prevention of crimes* is to the infliction of *punishment on offenders*.

On many occasions the Saviour of mankind declared, “He came not to call the righteous, but *sinners*, to repentance;” and his condescending to associate with publicans and sinners was upon this principle of benevolence. The parable, from which the text is taken, is thus related:

“A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard,
 “and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none:
 “then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, behold these
 “three years I come seeking fruit of this fig-tree and find
 “none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And
 “he, answering, said unto him, let it alone this year also, till
 “I

" I shall dig about it and dung it; and, if it bear fruit,
 " *well.*"

From these words I shall infer, in the first place, that our blessed Saviour has left to sinners a comfortable remedy against absolute despair.

Secondly, that if, according to St. Luke, sinners, of whatever description, may be allowed to hope for forgiveness; next to the detection of our own misdeeds, we should feel a solicitude that others may enjoy the like happy deliverance with ourselves.

And, lastly, I shall, in compliance with my duty and inclination upon the present occasion, recommend to your protection and support an institution founded on principles, which have justly distinguished it, and entitled it to the appellation of the Philanthropic Society.

First, then, our Saviour has left to sinners a comfortable remedy against absolute despair; a remedy to every one who has left himself time for amendment, who has any just reflection of mind, any real desire to recover the health of his soul. What less can be gathered from the sweet moral so charmingly displayed in the distinct parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, the prodigal son, and that of the *fig-tree*, which I have chosen as the subject of this discourse. The poor and uninformed were the particular ob-
 jects

jects of his attention. It was to them he graciously condescended to explain the nature of his divine mission; and, though we sometimes find him accepting the invitations of the affluent, yet, in many of his discourses, and particularly in his history of the rich man and Lazarus, and the moral of the sower, he lays a great stress upon the danger to which those are exposed, who are too much engrossed by the desire of riches, and the good things of this world; and, in the conclusion of the narration of the punishment with which God threatened the rich man, whose avarice usurped the place of gratitude, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee;" he says, "So is he who layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God."

And again he makes a most pointed observation to his disciples upon the conduct of the ruler, who asked him, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He had arrogated to himself the merit of a strict observance of the commandments from his youth: "All these have I kept from my youth up;" yet, when the one thing which he lacked was recommended to him by the Son of God, and that one thing *charity*, he went away sorrowful: — for why? he was very rich. He had not resolution to accept the invitation of his Saviour: "Sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me." The vice of avarice throughout the whole history of our Saviour's life, and the writings of the apostles, is severely
B reprobated,

reprobated; and, for this reason, it is the least likely to be reformed. Remorse and repentance attend the commission of most other faults; but the desire or immoderate love of wealth is like a consuming fire, and devoureth every reflection which opposeth itself to its voracious approach. Our Lord, upon this occasion, was very sorrowful; he said, "How hard is it for a rich man to go into the kingdom of God; and it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." — "And they, that heard it, said, Who then can be saved?" "And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." The Son of God demonstrated by this, his doctrine and practice, the pardoning mercy of God: that mercy, which, like the dew of heaven, was to revive and refresh the whole repenting world; a mercy which was worthy of him who came, not only to confirm and strengthen that which was already good, but more especially to seek and save that which was erring; nay, more, "*that which was lost.*"

There is not a man amongst us without numerous failings; I fear I may go farther, and say, without some wilful sins. But it is not to be doubted, that, as we endeavour after the amendment of these, as we refine and improve ourselves in goodness, it is to the proportional joy of all good men on earth, and of the angels in heaven. To obtain remission of sin, unfeigned repentance is necessary; it is indispensable, and cannot

cannot be too strongly enjoined on all: without repentance, that great work of regeneration cannot commence, without which there can be no salvation. This our Lord expressly declares in his conversation with Nicodemus; "Unless a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The only possible proof of this regeneration is repentance, whereby we forsake sin with a determined purpose to avoid evil; and in this our spiritual warfare, if we constantly and faithfully rely upon and look towards our heavenly Father we shall never fail to be victorious.

Secondly, If, according to Saint Luke, sinners, of whatever description, may be allowed to hope for forgiveness, next to the detection of our own misdeeds, we should feel a solicitude that others may enjoy the like happy deliverance with ourselves.

Whenever persons are brought to experience a proper sense of the enormity of sinning against the Lord, they will not fail to represent to others what beneficial effects have resulted from the change wrought upon them; and to persons of this description it will afford the highest gratification to rescue any fellow-creature from that misery and destruction which vice inevitably produces. We live in a country where the Christian religion is established: we profess to believe in that sacred word, whence all true doctrine is extracted; we have all been baptized into the faith of our

Lord Jesus Christ; and all of us, I trust, have recognized our belief in his divine person, his inimitable precepts and commandments. But, my brethren, to be Christians *indeed* it behoves us to imitate, as far as is possible, by his divine aid, his blessed example. He was *always* doing good: and the *meaner* and more *deplorable* the *object*, the *more readily* was he excited to *extend his aid*. Let us do so from a principle of *love* to him, and we shall assuredly receive treasure in heaven. To incite us the more to acts of compassion and benevolence towards those who require it, God has condescended to become our immediate debtor: Solomon tells us, "who so giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord;" this is lending at an interest-compound beyond all possible calculation, and where numerical figures would be multiplied to ^aseries beyond the power of computation. — From what has been before observed respecting *riches*, let it not be imagined that I would infer, *all* those who possess such are contaminated with the vice of avarice; such an idea was most remote from my mind, and it would be a breach of charity to make such an implication: it would be a most flagrant piece of injustice to my country at this period, when public charity and private beneficence alike attract the notice of all strangers, and excite the gratitude of such as partake of the liberal bounty. No! I consider riches as a sacred deposit, by which the wants and miseries of others may be relieved, and, in the present instance, where vice may be *prevented*; and, with these views, every honest endeavour to attain

attain wealth is not only just, but laudable: yea, our Lord enjoins us; "Make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness." But, if the application and improvement of wealth, which I have mentioned, is neglected, a weighty account will the possessors have to render; for, we must not only account for sins committed by ourselves, but every evil towards others, which, by the intervention of any means in our power, we might have averted. This last consideration is of more extent and importance than is in general imagined; and, were it duly observed, we should speedily discern most beneficial effect in society, and manifold crimes, now daily committed, would cease for ever to obstruct good order in the community of Christians.

Lastly, I shall, in compliance with my duty and inclination, upon the present occasion, recommend to your protection and support an institution, founded on principles which have justly distinguished it, and entitled it to the appellation of **The PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY.**

Amongst all the institutions which human wisdom and human benevolence have devised, this INSTITUTION, for the Promotion of Industry and the Reform of the criminal Poor, holds a distinguished, if not a pre-eminent, place. It is calculated to produce *all* the salutary effects to which the text alludes. Suffer me, therefore, to call your attention to the most important end of preventing and reclaiming
vice

vice in young persons, which this plan was constructed to effect.

We cannot look round, and survey the community of which we are members, without deploring the prevalence of crimes, which all the inflictions of the law prove inadequate to suppress: and, amongst those who suffer an *ignominious death*, how many are there, who, if early withdrawn from their associates in evil, and these, perhaps, *the very authors of their existence*, or *nearest kindred*, might have become useful members of society. The contagion of evil example, at an early time of life, is such as can but very seldom be withstood. Saint Paul observes, that "evil communications corrupt good manners:" what then can be expected of those, who, from their birth, have nothing exhibited to their view but scenes of profligacy and wickedness, and, on the first dawning of the infant intellect, are drawn into the beguiling paths of vice, and early initiated in the first principles of iniquity, which, from the imbecility of human nature, are acquired with greater ease than those which are good? What our Lord observes, "that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than ninety-nine just persons," is especially applicable to the present subject: and, whilst in this lower world, we can only faintly conceive what may be the joy of immaterial beings on contemplating the rescue of their fellow-immortals from destruction, and their being received into the regions of happiness,

piness, yet *some* judgement may be formed from experience of the heart-felt pleasure which those, contributing to *this* institution, *must* enjoy when they reflect that, out of those assisted and trained up in honest industry by their bounty, many, it is to be feared, would have degraded their nature by the commission of crimes, and some would have been untimely cut off as noxious to society: and, after the period of the mortal existence of those, now the objects of this charity, it behoves us to hope the whole ^{will} become partakers in eternal happiness; for, our Lord hath said, "Fear not, little flock! for it is your Father's " pleasure to give you the kingdom."

As this institution strikes at the very root of the evils with which the community is infested, as *religion, morality, humanity, and policy*, all unite to recommend its extension far beyond what hath been *as yet* practicable: to urge incentives or adduce farther arguments to prevail with you to interest yourselves in its success, would be implicating that you belie your profession, and retain only the name of Christians, without possessing that principle of charity, which is indispensable to the constitution of a disciple of Christ: "If ye love me, " keep my commandments:" and of these commandments in the New Testament the second is, *to love our neighbours as ourselves*; and of course it is to be understood, that to those, who *most* require our aid, it should be *especially* extended: "the *whole* have no need of a physician, but *they who are sick*." Let us hope, that the time is not far distant, when,
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by the efforts of *this institution*, and others similar to it, we shall see the kingdom of darkness loosing its influence by a reformation of manners amongst the lower order of people; and those crimes, which now stalk abroad at noon-day, defying the vigilance of the executive power, shall be banished from our land, and honest industry, sobriety, and religious attention to their duty, shall be seen to inhabit the present haunts of villany.

The mode of bringing forward youth in all civilized countries, from the remotest antiquity, has ever been an object of the first consideration: for, on that important circumstance does the happiness and prosperity, yea, the very existence of a state, depend. To deplore what is past and irremediable is unavailing; but, had an institution, similar to the present, existed long ago, I have no doubt our community would have exhibited a very different aspect from the present. This leads me to advert to the frequency of our capital punishments, which has so much excited the attention, and too justly the severe reflection, of foreigners. It hath been observed, (whether truly or not I will not take upon me to decide,) that, upon an average, more are consigned to an ignominious death in this country, in one year, than in all the rest of Europe in the same time. Far be it from my intention to arraign our criminal laws as sanguinary; they constitute a part of that code which is the subject of universal admiration, and which has served as an example
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for the model of others. Were I to say, that, as a nation, we are *more* depraved than others, I should alike violate the truth, and do an injury to my own feelings and persuasion. The criminal code is *rarely* employed, *except in cases of delinquency among the lowest order of society*. Trace the objects against whom the laws are exerted to their utmost, and with their most rigid severity; institute an inquiry into the causes *why* so many depredations are committed on the public, and it will be found that by far the *majority* of the culprits are brought up without religious education, or indeed any education whatever: who, precluded the advantage of knowing the limits prescribed to right and wrong, often trespass on the laws in a degree of which they are not conscious, and entail on themselves miseries, which, had they foreseen, would have restrained them within the bounds of justice. I do not mean that the fear of punishment would have proved the prevention of crimes, but that the far higher and more noble principle of a sense of duty and moral obligation would have caused many to adhere to that line of conduct which would have rendered the laws salutary for their protection, instead of arming those very laws with *vengeance* for their punishment.

It is necessary to enforce the importance of individual integrity, and to endeavour to convince all, (who are not impenetrable to conviction, and beyond a possibility of being reclaimed,) that to be good is to be happy.

In political speculations, we hear much of a reform being requisite for the melioration of our national condition; may this be extended to a reform of a moral nature, by reclaiming *offenders*, and preventing those who are in imminent danger from becoming so! And as essential benefit will be derived to the state, I firmly believe, by this measure, as by all that the ablest politician can devise respecting the representation of the people. Inculcate the principles of religion, virtue, and industry, into the minds of the *poor*, and you will have nothing to apprehend from any principles, however dangerous in themselves, which may be offered to seduce them from their *allegiance to the sovereign*, or their obedience to the laws.

Many of the patrons of and benefactors to the present institution are in the important characters of *legislators*; I wish *all*, that are so, were added to the present number; for, in *that capacity*, they are peculiarly called upon to promote whatever has a tendency toward the *welfare* of the *state*, and I know not *another* institution amongst us so directly calculated for that purpose: and I fondly anticipate, that, when the *vast importance* of this institution is universally discerned, and its salutary effects manifested by the diminution of offenders, there will not be *an individual*, in decent circumstances, who will not contribute towards its extension and support,

support, until there is not a single object remaining, who may not be benefited by it.

If, therefore, we would prove ourselves worthy the appellation of Christians, let us aid the apparently-*barren fig-tree*, and, *if it bear fruit, well*. Let us hope and pray to become partakers of that happiness which Christ has promised to such as "love him, and keep his commandments." What He addressed to his immediate friends and followers, whilst on earth, is alike applicable to us: "Me you have not always, but the poor you have;" "and whosoever giveth to one of these little ones, in my name, giveth unto me." "And whoso shall receive *one* such little child in my name receiveth me."

Recommending most earnestly what I have been led to remark on this occasion to your serious attention, I persuade and flatter myself that every one present will so use the gifts of Providence, vested with him for the purpose of doing good, that, by making "friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, they may attain to eternal habitations;" remembering always, "that faith without good works is dead;" — and that we can only evince the sincerity of our religion and profession by the observance of what that religion enjoins, of which the most prominent feature is charity. — Recollect, that "more blessed are they that give than those who receive." — The benevolent mind is cheered by every largess
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it bestows, and that those, who persevere in well doing, (attributing, at the same time, all the inclination, as well as the means of doing so, to the Lord, from whom is every good and perfect gift.) will finally attain to eternal happiness; "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest;" where the recollection of our past lives will be a source of joy and exultation, through Him "who loved us and washed us in his blood, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification."

"My name receiveth me," "And who shall receive our little child in my name, given unto one of these little ones, in my name, giveth unto me," "wage, but the poor you have;" "Me you have not at on earth, is still applicable to us."

THE END.
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